

Video Killed The Radio Star by pendragonfics

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: F/M

Language: English

Characters: Billy Hargrove, Eleven | Jane Hopper, Jim "Chief" Hopper, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Nancy Wheeler, Neil Hargrove, Reader, Steve Harrington

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Summary:

Reader isn't exactly Brooke Shields -- she's quiet, prefers books to people, and likes to listen to the newest hits on the radio with her friends. But when she's paired up with *the* Billy Hargrove by her math teacher to help him from falling behind, the *status quo* of her life with her dad and sister, and of Hawkins High is interrupted.

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Author's Note:

I know Billy is a dirtbag, but after I watched *Power Rangers* I fell in love with his actor. And then when I rewatched *Stranger Things* S2, I kinda liked the mullet. What can I say? The boy has charm despite being a very well-written antagonist and if I was in the series I'd strange his father for being such an asshole!

“Why do you want me to hate you so bad?” you whisper to him.

You were sitting on the porch of Mr. Hargrove’s house on the edge of Hawkins, drinking soft drink and trying to tutor the newcomer to Hawkins High on math. His credit transfer from his old school in California might have been good over there, but in Indiana, in this small town where there wasn’t anything to distract someone from their studies other than sport or dating, it wasn’t up to scratch. Thus, you were here, trying to get Billy to pass the next quiz.

Billy blinks, and with a straight face that makes you want to punch him right between his pretty eyes, he says, “Because, sweet cheeks,” he looks away, down the driveway that Neil Hargrove could drive up any minute, “I am bad.”

“Yeah?” you ask him. Shoving the maths textbook away from you, and your hands into the pockets of your jean jacket, you bite your tongue. It was cold out, and your Dad warned you before you took your bike here, but you liked your jean jacket. “Well, then Hargrove...why is it you want me, and everyone else to believe you’re a Danny Zuko, when you’re just a Brad Majors?”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” He says, voice sharp like broken glass underfoot. He clicks his lighter to life and lit up the end of a cigarette.

You shrug. “I don’t know, Hargrove, why don’t you tell me?”

He takes a pull of his lit cigarette. “You don’t like *Grease*?” he replies.

You shake your head. “No, Hargrove.” Closing your eyes, you take a deep breath, “Who are you trying to fool? I know you’re a nice guy. Under all of *that*.”

It’s then he chokes. Coughing, he wheezes, “Nice guy?” he laughs, “_____, I’ll have what you’re smoking.”

You huff. “I’m not smoking anything!” you cross your arms, feeling a little mad. “I know you’re not half bad –,”

“First nice, now half bad? _____, who’re you – I’m Billy Hargrove, asshole, king of Hawkins High. I am not nice. I’m an asshole, and you know it.” He’s nothing short of angry, and in his temper, he tosses his cigarette on the porch, and crushes it, still lit, under his boot. “Is this because I agreed to let you tutor me? I don’t need pity, much less from a nerd like you.”

You blink, watching him. “What are you saying?”

He doesn’t respond. He just sits there, looking at his shoe which smashed his cigarette into the wood of the porch, and it is then when you take a deep breath, and begin gathering your books.

“Whatever,” you say, trying to not show how much his words hurt.

Nerd.

Nobody had called you that in years, since you were in middle school, and Nancy threatened to beat up anyone who called you that. “This took up too much of my time anyway.” You shove your books into your backpack, and in the hurry to pack up, some of the textbooks become dog-eared. You don’t care. He’s on your nerves. You turn to look at Billy to say a goodbye but doesn’t meet your eyes at all.

With a huff, you march to where your bike rests against the porch, and flip the bird to the King of Hawkins High, “Good luck passing math.”

The next time you will see Billy Hargrove, you're seated in the back of the math classroom, using your free period, and the availability of the empty room before math class for some alone time. It's nice. Nancy is off holding hands with Jonathan in the shade of their favourite tree in the schoolyard, and Steve is off working on his American history report last minute in the library. You're thirty pages into *To Kill A Mockingbird* when you realise that the little office off the back of the math room is not empty – as there are voices coming from there.

“It's either be tutored by Ms. _____, or you fail this class.” Mr. Mundy's voice carried, slightly louder than his usual tone.

You frown, placing your homemade bookmark in place, lowering the book. It's then you hear a *bang!* like small thunder, or a fist upon a desk, and you hear, “No! No. I can't fail. Isn't there anyone else who can...” there's a silence, “*tutor me?*”

“I'm sorry, Mr. Hargrove, but no.” His tone is firm. “I cannot bend the rules for one student.”

Your heart beats faster, like a rabbit learning there's a fox nearby. Instinct wants you to run out the math room before anyone sees you. Your more logical part of the brain thinks it's better to duck under the table. Instead, when Mr. Mundy and Billy come out of the backroom, you freeze, and amidst your panic, you fall from your chair.

“Ah, Ms. _____,” Mr. Mundy says, as you look up from behind the desk you toppled behind. You know your face is heating up in embarrassment, you can feel it in your ears. “I was just speaking to Mr. Hargrove about the little issue between the both of you. I know you said you don't have the capacity to tutor Billy anymore, but, is there any off-chance you would take him on again?”

You stand, brushing the dirt from your knees, and look to where Billy stands, behind Mr. Mundy. He's wearing a brown leather jacket that the other girls at school might think is bitchin', but to you, it's uglier than lumpy Christmas sweaters, and reminds you of his father. Billy's scowling, too, and if you know a scowl (they're commonplace on your sister's face, *especially* when she doesn't get her way), he hates

your guts.

“Mr. Mundy,” you start, shaking your head. “I told you that I don’t have the time for tutoring. Or the patience. He’s quite behind.”

“Yes, I know –,” Your teacher wiped a hand over his stubbled chin and huffed. “I didn’t want it to get to this... _____, if you tutor Billy, I will personally write a letter of recommendation to your preferred college, come senior year.” You look between Mr. Mundy and Billy, and, as you do this, he adds, “I’ll organise this to be written as an extracurricular –,”

“Fine.” You look at your shoes. If your Dad heard how hard you changed your mind, he’d march right into the principle’s office and demand a hearing between them both. “I better get a great recommendation.” You say, as if a curse under your breath. As Mr. Mundy goes to move, perhaps to the staff lounge for his pre-class cup of coffee, or behind the gym classroom for a sneaky cigarette with the English faculty, you add, “And if I quit one more time, I’m not tutoring him again. No matter what recommendation I get.”

Mr. Mundy walks out, mumbling in agreement. But as Billy turns to go, you address him, staring him down. “Tutoring starts at eight in the morning, my place.” Fishing in your backpack, you tear the back cover off, and write down your address. “Be there or be square.”

This time, you have Billy over at your house. It’s nothing much – your Dad lived sidled up to the woods in a tiny house. It has enough room for you, your Dad, his collection of music, and your little sister. It feels weird to have Billy Hargrove over, especially since you thought you rid yourself of him already. You’re set up at the dinner table when he knocks on the door, and when you greet him wordlessly, and lead him inside, you know he’s staring at you.

“What?” you ask, deadpan. “Do I have two heads?”

He shrugs, dropping into chair opposite where you’re set up. “Nothing, nerd.”

You frown, jaw set. “Okay, if I’m going to tutor you, Hargrove, we

need some ground rules. Like, don't call me a nerd. Or any names. Just _____. You grit your teeth. "Just because I'm good at some subjects at school doesn't mean you or Tommy H can walk all over me."

He raises his hands in surrender. "Alright, I won't do those things." He wipes a hand through his long hair, and with a groan, he rolls his eyes, "Can we start? I gotta be done before noon."

You nod, moving to take a seat. "Yeah. Um, this week was basic algebra, so I found these problems from the textbook, so we can practice some examples..." before too long, you delve into the problems, and explain the fundamentals of how to understand the problems.

When it got to ten o'clock, you noticed how hungry you had gotten, and how broken Billy's attention was getting. It was when Billy worked on the latest batch of examples, you moved to the kitchen, and began preparing the oven for pizza rolls. Your sister had really taken to them, and there were lots of them in the kitchen. It wasn't until you shoved them in the oven that you realised that Billy had been watching you.

"What?" you demand, hands posed upon your hips. When he doesn't say anything, you turn to the egg timer beside the oven, and clock the right amount of time, and return to your seat opposite Billy. But he's still staring at you. "Have you never had pizza rolls before, or...?"

He shakes his head. "You're different." He says, and adds, quickly, as if speaking as he's thinking, "Every time you open your mouth."

"What, you've never met someone who's progressively more pissed off at you?" you retort, rolling your eyes. When Billy says nothing, you pick up your pencil where you left it before you got up and go back to the algebra problem you had begun to sketch out for him. "Anyways, it's not like you're being horrible to me now, so I'm sorry if I'm not spitting fire."

He shrugs. "I was going to say that you're not half bad."

You chuckle at that. Didn't you say that about him, before? "Don't get soft on me, Hargrove. We've got limited time before the pizza rolls are ready."

There's a drive-in cinema just on the outskirts of Hawkins, and your father has the night off from work. You'd think that as police chief, he'd be able to work out more times off with his family, but no. It's nice – you're in the backseat of the station wagon with your sister Jane, and as you pull into the lot and pay for the tickets, you watch as Jane skirts away from a kiss goodbye from Dad when she goes off to find her friends. As you watch her find Steve Harrington's car – your friend often took her and her friends to the movies – you clamber to the passenger seat beside your dad.

"So, what's this movie about, again?" your dad Jim Hopper asks you, pulling on the handbrake.

You roll your eyes. "It's in the name, Dad." You point at the flyer you picked up at the ticket booth, pointing at the title. "*Superman III*. The third Superman movie. You know, about..."

"Superman?" he guesses.

You laugh, but midway, you choke on it. Because walking this way is none other than your tutee, Billy Hargrove. He's wearing a button-down shirt that's actually decently done up, and there isn't a cigarette hanging out of his lip. In the split second between you noticing him and your dad noticing something's up with you, you bend as if you're going to tie your shoelace to hide your face. But you forget the dashboard that's between you and your task, and you headbutt it in the effort.

You're rubbing your sore head when Billy sees you, and, your father. His step falters, and, as if it never happened, he keeps on his path, and walks away.

"What was that?" your father asks you.

You shake your head. "Nothing, Dad." You give him a withering look. "What, a boy looks at me, and now this?"

He nods in earnest. “Yes, _____. Because that’s the Hargrove boy who’s always making trouble around town.” He replies, and narrowing his eyes, he adds “Don’t tell me you’re friends with him.”

“No!” you cry out. “No.”

But internally, you’re not sure. Now at school, he actually acknowledges you in the hallways, and when you meet up at Hawkins library for tutoring – a neutral location that isn’t his house with Max or his father around, nor your family – he’s, well, not an asshole. Passably nice. You’re not sure if it’s because you’re seeing less bruises on him when you meet up, or if it’s because you’re not noticing his bloodied knuckles wrapped around a lead pencil anymore, but whatever it is, it’s working.

“Alright then,” your dad raises both his hands in surrender. “Sorry, kiddo. I just don’t want you mixing with the wrong crowd, you know?”

You frown, facing your father. “I know you mean well and all, Dad, but I’m not a kid anymore. I can be friends with nice Nancy Wheeler, quiet Jonathan Buyers, cool Steve Harrington *and* bad Billy Hargrove if I wanted to.” You look at your lap. In a quiet voice, you add, “besides, I think I am.”

“Didn’t you just say...?”

“I’ll be right back,” you tell your dad.

Before he can protest, you dash out of the car, following where you saw Billy walk off earlier. Weaving through the parked cars on the open field, you stand on tip-toes, trying to see where he got off to. You can see Mr. Clarke’s car parked nearby, Tommy H and Carol making out beside the popcorn booth on the edge of the field, but no Billy.

“Didn’t know you came here,” you hear a family voice behind you.

Turning, you see him. He’s holding a small popcorn, and in the other hand, a packet of sweets. A girl beside him groans when she realises Billy has stopped walking, and tugs at his sleeve.

“C’mon, the movie’s starting!” she urges.

Billy shakes his head, “Yeah, I know Max.” He passes her the food, and adds, “You go back to your friends, I just want to say hi.” She makes a face, but silently walks away. When it’s just you and Billy, standing between stranger’s cars at the drive-in, you clear your throat, unsure where to go from here. You hadn’t thought it this far. “Hi.” He says, after a beat.

You give him a little smile. “Hi, Billy.” Nervously, you bite your lip, and add quickly, “Um, are you here with your sister?” you ask, watching as the little girl walks away to Steve Harrington’s car where the other kids are hanging out.

He nods, playing with his shirtsleeve. “Yeah, just dropping her off.” He chuckles, looking at you. “I didn’t know you came out here.”

You shrug. “Didn’t you hear? Video killed the radio star.” He laughs at that, but after, neither of you say a thing. A beat passes between the both of you, and you speak up. “You know, if your dad gets too much for you, my Dad can step in.” you say, voice low so anyone listening in around can’t hear.

Billy frowns. “Wait...that guy who you were with in the car – your dad is –,”

You nod, pocketing your hands. “Yeah. Chief Hopper.” you shrug. “Well. If that’s not enough of a buzzkill in itself, I’m sure you’re itching to go back into town to hang out with your friends...” you say.

He shrugs. “Or I could hang out with you.” He says. “if that’s cool.”

You blink, unsure if what you’re feeling is shock. “Yeah, um. I’m just here to watch the movie.” You motion to where your dad is parked with your shoulder, and add, “Would it be more of a buzzkill if we watched it with my dad...?” you propose. “He won’t admit it, but he’s lonely without my sister and me.”

Billy takes a deep breath, and after a moment’s consideration, he says, “What the hell, why not.”

You watch *Superman III* in the backseat of the police station wagon, ignoring your father's wide eyes. When it comes to the credits, you ignore Jane's wide eyes, as well as the quiet stares of her friends, including Max and Steve Harrington. The drive home is quiet too, with the exception of the moment in which your dad took the key out of the ignition once you all got back to the house.

"If _____ has a boyfriend, I want to kiss Mike." Jane pipes up.

In the rear-view mirror, you watch your father's face pale. "No!"

Author's Note:

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